

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4069

S E C R E T TRIPOLI 0194

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, LY, US

SUBJ: US-LIBYAN RELATIONS: NAVY AIRCRAFT INCIDENT

REF: TRIPOLI 0182

1. AFTER DELIVERING LIBYAN RESPONSE TO OUR PROTEST OVER
NAVY AIRCRAFT INCIDENT (REFTEL), MFA ACTING DIRECTOR AMERICAS
DEPT, IBRAHIM SAHAD, SAID HE WISHED TO EMPHASIZE THREE
ELEMENTS CONTAINED IN LIBYAN RESPONSE: A) HE CONTRASTED
WHAT HE CALLED "REASONABLE" TONE OF LIBYAN RESPONSE WITH
"HARSH" WORDING OF OUR PROTEST NOTE. B) LIBYAN AIR FORCE
(LARAF) HAD NOT "INTERCEPTED" US AIRCRAFT, BUT HAD MERELY
SOUGHT TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL INTRUDER. LARG CONSIDERS
"INTERCEPT" OF AIRCRAFT TO MEAN ANY ACTION TAKEN AGAINST
AN "INTRUDER" AIRCRAFT BEYOND SIMPLE IDENTIFICATION.
C) SAHAD SAID US AIRCRAFT WAS IDENTIFIED ONLY AFTER IT WAS
FOUND TO BE IN A LIBYAN "PROHIBITED" AREA.

2. REGARDING SAHAD'S FIRST POINT, I TOLD HIM WORDING OF
OUR NOTE REFLECTED OUR VERY SERIOUS CONCERN OVER SAFETY
USG AIRCRAFT TRAVELLING OVER HIGH SEAS. ON POINT B,
I SAID PURPOSE OF OUR NOTE WAS TO PROTEST DANGER TO
WHICH USG AIRCRAFT SUBJECTED IN INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE
BY MANEUVERS TWO LARAF AIRCRAFT, WHETHER TWO LIBYAN
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AIRCRAFT WERE ON INTERCEPT OR IDENTIFICATION MISSION.
HE CLAIMED THAT LARG'S INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT
DEMONSTRATED THAT LARAF HAD NOT TAKEN ANY ACTION
WHICH ENDANGERED USG AIRCRAFT.

3. BEYOND LIBYAN FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE HAZARDOUS
MANEUVERS LIBYAN AIRCRAFT, MOST TROUBLESOME ELEMENT

OF LARG RESPONSE IS IN UNCLEAR LIBYAN DEFINITION OF PROHIBITED, TRAINING, OR RESTRICTED AREAS WITHIN THE LIBYAN FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR). WHEN WE DISCUSSED THESE AREAS AND WORDING OF LIBYAN RESPONSE, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SAHAD WAS NOT BRIEFED ON PRECISE NATURE ANY LARG CLAIMS OVER AIR SPACE OFF TRIPOLI. THUS I DID NOT PURSUE MATTER FURTHER.

4. SAHAD CONCLUDED MEETING (WHICH WAS REASONABLY FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT) BY OBSERVING THAT US-LIBYAN RELATIONS HAD PASSED THROUGH RATHER DIFFICULT PERIOD. HE SAID LARG LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN UPSET OVER AIRCRAFT INCIDENT AND SINAIA ARTICLE WHICH REPORTED THAT LIBYA IS NOW ON US "ENEMIES" LIST (I GAVE COPY OF DEPT PRESS GUIDANCE ON SINAIA ARTICLE). HE NOTED THAT "SOME" IN LARG HAD CONCLUDED THAT AIRCRAFT INCIDENT AND "ENEMIES" ARTICLE DEMONSTRATED THAT US RESPONSE TO LIBYAN MOVES FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WAS EMPHATICALLY NEGATIVE. LIBYAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAD ARGUED THAT BOTH EVENTS WERE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION. IT HAD TAKEN MORE THAN A WEEK TO RESPOND TO ARTICLE AND AIRCRAFT INCIDENT, SAHAD SAID, BECAUSE LARG HAD WANTED FULL INFORMATION BEFORE TAKING ANY ACTION WHICH MIGHT AFFECT POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVED TIES WITH THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION.

COMMENT: WHILE LARG CHOSE TO ADOPT CONVENIENT LIBYAN EMBASSY ARGUMENT, WE SUSPECT THAT ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH LARG MUST HAVE CONSIDERED PAST WEEK IS
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FACT THAT LIBYA ALREADY HAS AN EXCESS OF ENEMIES AT THE MOMENT WITHOUT ENCOURAGING A NEW CONFRONTATION WITH US. END COMMENT.
BERGSTROM

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